

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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SPONSOR STATEMENT

Senate Bill 172 Alaska Health Care Commission

Alaska is currently facing serious healthcare cost, access and quality issues. Between 1991 and 2005, health care expenditures in our state more than tripled from \$1.6 billion to \$5.3 billion. Costs are expected to double again by 2013 to over \$10 billion. All levels of government – state, local, and federal – are affected, and Alaska's economy cannot sustain this inflationary growth. The purpose of SB 172 is to establish in statute the Alaska Health Care Commission to address the need for health care reform in our state. This issue is complex and broad in scope, and cannot be dealt with adequately unless we have a permanent body to plan and follow through for long range comprehensive health care reform.

The two most recent groups to work on the issue of health care reform in Alaska, the Alaska Health Care Roundtable (2005) and the Alaska Health Care Strategies Planning Council (2007) both recommended that a permanent body be established to address the problem of health care reform. The Roundtable (which met for 2 years) and the Planning Council (which met for 6 months) recognized that the problem is too great to be effectively addressed through a short-term, ad-hoc body.

The Alaska Health Care Commission would be established in the Department of Health and Social Services, and would consist of a thirteen member body including public officials and private citizens. Representatives from both the executive and legislative branches of state government are included, as well as citizens representing the private business sector, the health care community, and consumers. Three members are to be ex officio appointees from the legislature and the governor's office. The composition and small size would enable efficient and effective teamwork and decision-making, while bringing a balance of viewpoints and perspectives.

The commission would provide its recommendations and support the development of a statewide plan to address the quality, accessibility, and availability of health care for all citizens of the State. A plan for reform will be based on education, sustainability, management efficiency, health care effectiveness, private-public partnerships, research, personal responsibility and individual choice.

Alaska's need for healthcare reform is pressing and must be dealt with thoroughly and efficiently, with a long range view towards meaningful and lasting change. The Alaska Health Care Commission would play an important role in this process, and it is essential that we make it a permanent component of the Department of Health and Social Services, so that present as well as future issues with Alaska's healthcare systems can be better anticipated, understood and addressed.